



# Ready, Set - Kindergarten!

## Family Guide for Preschool – Kindergarten Development



*The Individual Way  
Each Child Learns*

*One of six guides to help  
with readiness for school*

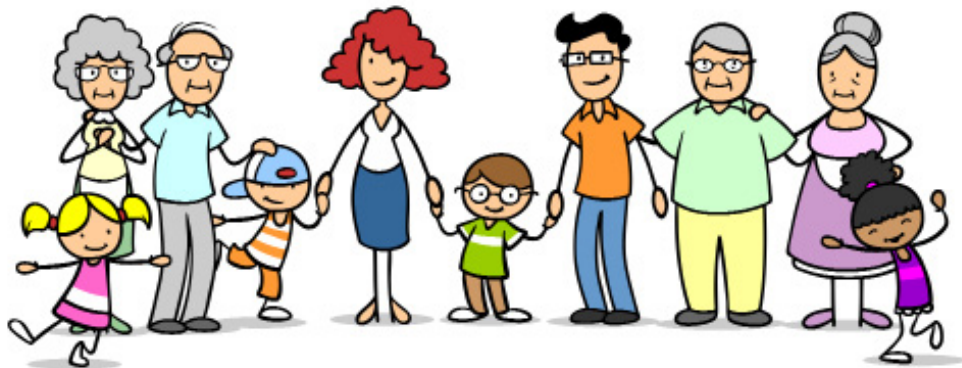


**Carolina  
Family  
Engagement  
Center**

*Equity, Opportunity & Excellence in Education*

Readiness is not just ABCs or counting or knowing colors. Families need to be aware of ALL areas of their child's development – physical, emotional, language, and thinking. Children have a great ability to learn and grow. Adults provide the best support for their child when they encourage their individual abilities and readiness to learn.

For preschoolers and kindergartners, the highest form of research and learning is through play. "Play is how children begin to understand and process their world." Make it fun!



As children play with others, they are developing language and social skills, using their imagination, working on problem solving and developing physically. As you play with your child, remember readiness for school is developing a child's willing attitude and positive view of learning new things, not just gaining knowledge.

The more you know, the more you can help your child grow and gain readiness for school.

Six areas of growth and experience help a child progress and succeed, research tells us.

## SIX AREAS OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT



The individual way each child learns  
(Approaches to Play and Learning)



Feelings about self, developing relationships, and controlling emotions  
(Emotional and Social Development)



Their motor development, nutrition, health/safety  
(Health and Physical Development)



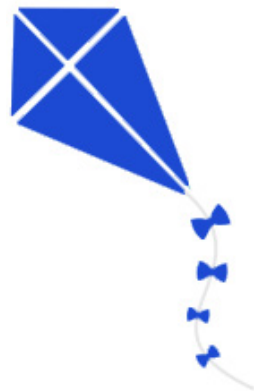
Gaining the basics for reading, writing, and speaking  
(Language Development)



Exploring shapes, patterns, numbers, comparisons  
(Mathematical Thinking)



Learning to think, make decisions, solve problems  
(Cognitive Development)



This guide is one of six that offers a brief introduction to each area and provides a sample of the experiences and skills children need in order to be prepared to move through preschool, at three-, four-, and five-years of age.

All adults caring for children wear many hats. You must be a playmate, nurse, cook, coach, and teacher. This document is designed to help by giving:

- Examples of the experiences and typical range of skills your child should learn and be able to do at each level of development as they learn through play.
- Activities on how you can help your child at home.
- Additional resources for information and help.

Every child progresses at a different rate. The developmental indicators included here describe what a child generally achieves by the END of each age level.

These experiences and skills are drawn from the South Carolina Early Learning Standards ([https://www.scchildcare.org/media/55097/SC\\_ELS-second-edit.pdf](https://www.scchildcare.org/media/55097/SC_ELS-second-edit.pdf)) and the South Carolina College- and Career- Ready Standards (<https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/standards-learning/>).

Both guidelines were developed by numerous experts in learning, based on years of research, and after review and comment by the public.



## Curiosity, Information Seeking, & Eagerness



Children are born with the desire to learn and to figure things out. When adults support them and encourage their efforts, children feel safe and secure and are more willing to try new activities and take intellectual risks. By stepping out of their comfort zone, children expand their learning.

These Ready, Set steps include:

### Age 3 Preschool

- Discover things that interest and amaze them, and seek to share them with others.
- Show interest in a growing range of subjects, ideas, and tasks.
- Try different ways of doing things to see what and how they work (adjust blocks used as a ramp to make a ball roll faster and farther).



### Age 4 Preschool

- Discover things that interest and amaze them, and seek to share them with others.
- Show interest in a growing range of subjects, ideas, and tasks.
- Ask questions to find out more about the things that interest them.
- Choose among different ways to explore their surroundings based on experience (use a ruler to measure something new).
- Show interest in mastering new skills (riding a bike, writing their name).



### Age 5 Kindergarten

- Play every day to promote curiosity and begin to say "I wonder" about their interests.
- With help, make daily exploration of stories and connect to personal experiences, other stories, or surroundings.
- With help, develop a plan of action for collecting information from several sources through play, conversations, seeing, or hearing.
- With help, choose information, review ideas, and share their learning.





# Play & Imagination



Play and imagination come naturally to children. Play gives children the means to understand and process how the world works around them. Imagination gives “the ability to form a picture in your mind of something that you have not seen or experienced; the ability to think of new things” (Webster). Encouraging play and imagination develops language and word skills, and promotes problem-solving skills and muscle development.

These Ready, Set steps include:

## Age 3 Preschool

- Engage in make-believe play with imaginary objects.
- Talk to other children and share materials during play.
- Express knowledge of everyday life and culture through play (pretend to fix hair like a family member, copy family member’s work during play).
- Offer new ideas about how to do or make things.
- Experiment with language, musical sounds, and movement.

## Age 4 Preschool

- Choose to use new knowledge and skills during play (adds a new role at play based on a story or TV character).
- Use more complex and different words to share ideas and influence others during play.
- Demonstrate family values and “rules” through play (tells another child “That’s not what we have for supper.”).
- Plan play settings and use or create different props or tools to enact them.
- Make up stories, songs, or dances for fun.

## Age 5 Kindergarten

- Explore and create meaning through play, talking, drama, and storytelling.
- Practice the skills of taking turns, listening to others, and speaking clearly.
- Explain their own ideas and build on the ideas of others by replying and linking to comments made.
- Use proper props, images, or drawings to support a conversation.
- Use voice expression, rhythm, and rhyme when telling a story, role-playing, or singing.





## Risk Taking, Problem Solving, & Flexibility



Children learn to manage their feelings and impulses during these years. Preschoolers' ability to regulate and manage emotions is still developing and it is not unusual for them to sometimes have difficulty controlling their feelings and expressing their emotions fittingly.

These Ready, Set steps include:

### Age 3 Preschool

- Express a belief that they can do things that are hard.
- Accept new challenges when offered.
- Seek and use ideas and help from adults and children to solve problems ("How can I get this box open?").
- Use different strategies to solve many types of problems.



### Age 4 Preschool

- Express a belief that they can do things that are hard.
- Ask to participate in new experiences that they have seen or heard about.
- Seek and use ideas and help from adults and children to solve problems ("How can I get this box open?").
- Describe the steps they will use to solve a problem.



### Age 5 Kindergarten

- Find daily opportunities for play and exploring to promote a sense of curiosity and desire to try new things.
- With help, daily explore stories or other written information to make connections to personal experiences, other stories/information, or their surroundings.
- With help, develop a plan of action for collecting information from several sources, such as play, talking with adults and other children, seeing, or reading.





## Attentiveness, Effort, & Persistence



Attentiveness (or active listening), hard work, and staying at a task until it is finished are all skills important to functioning and succeeding in school and life. Adult actions and guidance during the preschool years can help your child develop and improve these skills.

These Ready, Set steps include:

### Age 3 Preschool

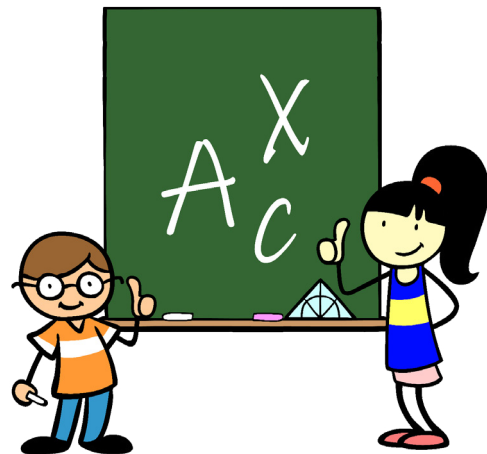
- Show increasing independence and purpose when making choices ("I want to go to the playground").
- Focus on activities for a short period of time, even with interruptions (continue working on a puzzle even though another child is talking).
- Express goals or plans and follow through on them ("I'm going to draw a house").
- Seek help from others to complete a challenging activity (ask a friend for help in naming an unfamiliar animal in a picture).
- When something doesn't work, tries different ways to complete the task (puts blocks together in a different way to rebuild a tower that has fallen).
- Keep working to complete tasks, including those that are somewhat difficult.

### Age 4 Preschool

- Show more independence and purpose when making choices ("I'm going to the playground to make a track for my car").
- Sometimes able to focus for longer periods of time on a task (sorting clothes by color).
- On their own, identify and seek things needed to complete activities or tasks (gather supplies to make a birthday card).
- Seek help from others to complete a challenging activity (ask a friend for help in naming an unfamiliar animal in a picture).
- When something doesn't work, tries different ways to complete the task (puts blocks together in a different way to rebuild a tower that has fallen).
- Keep trying until a challenging activity is complete despite interruptions (puzzle started before lunch is finished later).

### Age 5 Kindergarten

- After being unsuccessful in first attempts, continue to participate/practice in activities (catching a football, writing a letter of the alphabet).







## Learning At Home



To encourage your preschooler's imagination and curiosity, you must accept that there will be lots of activity, noise, and sometimes, dirt. Keep in mind that when you support your child's efforts at something new even though they fail, they feel safe to take on challenges and secure to fail and try again. Here are a few suggestions for things to do at home to help your child stick with a challenge, use their imagination to solve a problem, and be willing to learn from failure - all good skills for life.

This suggestion requires no special equipment but is very difficult for adults after a long day. Listen - really listen - to what your child has to say and give them more than a one-word response. You must work at being an active listener so they learn how important it is to listen well.

Let your child know what "pay attention" means. Try this definition: "Listen with your ears, your eyes, your mind, and your heart."

Encourage curiosity by being as awed as they are (by that ordinary rock) and asking open-ended questions ("What will happen when we add water to the flour?" "What is that worker trying to do?" "Why is the child in the story crying?").

Think out loud as you try to solve a problem so your child will develop this "self-talk" for figuring things out ("How can I make a cake? First, I'll read a recipe, then check to see I have the ingredients, also look to see if I have enough time, and then I'll start.").

Help your child think out loud. ("How many cups of water will fill this can? What else can we use? A glass? Our hands? The faucet?").

A cardboard box (the bigger, the better) can be just about anything to a preschooler. If they look at you for a starter, try suggesting a space ship or a magic car and they'll take it from there.

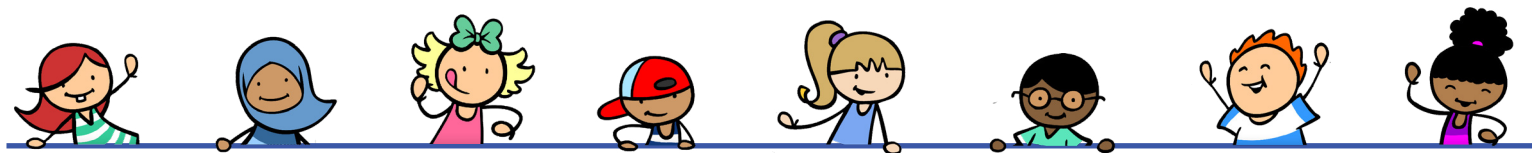
Turn everyday events into adventures. Pretend with your child that your visit to the grocery store is a trip to another planet. Turn dinner preparation into a visit to a restaurant.

Encourage your child to think about new ideas ("Have you ever wondered where this road goes?" "What if you built a tower instead of a house?").

Read a story and then have your child make up another ending or change the way one of the characters acts. Read another story and ask what might happen if a character from the other story was the hero.

When a block building falls down or a puzzle is hard, acknowledge their disappointment, then urge them to figure out what happened, and have them try again. Active support gives children the confidence to take risks.

When your child blows up because the task is hard, suggest they run around to get the "angries" out and let them return to the task later. Don't get after them about it, but let him know that they can do the task if they stick with it.





## Additional Information



Want more discussion on the importance of play? Read this short article from the National Association for the Education of Young Children at <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/10-things-every-parent-play>.

If persistence is difficult for your child, look over <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/teaching-persistence-1st-and-2nd-grade/>. While this article talks about helping develop this skill in first and second graders, the tips are very useful at any age.

For interesting, inexpensive craft ideas for promoting creativity, take a look at <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/225039312602827964/>.

For instructions for all kinds of crafts, including how to make paint and finger-paint at home, see <https://www.education.com/activity/preschool/arts-and-crafts/>.

This site, created by an early childhood educator, has a number of interesting activities for your child, with pictures and suggestions on the questions to ask to encourage imagination and exploration: <https://www.the-empowerededucatoronline.com/learning-activities/>. While this site promotes sales of kits, there are plenty of ideas in this free section. Also look at the week of activities listed: <https://www.theempowerededucatoronline.com/2015/01/a-week-of-play-based-learning-ideas-activities-and-inspiration.html/>.

Parent Map offers some fun play ideas to get your child moving, creating, and crafting: <https://www.parentmap.com/article/25-indoor-play-activities-from-a-preschool-teacher>.

If you have a group of children with you or it is a rainy day, here are several fun game suggestions: <https://www.pre-kpages.com/indoor-recess-games-and-activities-for-preschoolers/>.



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The Carolina Family Engagement Center is located in and coordinated through the University of South Carolina's SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) in the University of South Carolina's College of Education. Contact them at <https://cfec.sc.gov/> or 1-800-868-2232 or 1-803-777-7658.

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